from laboratory to praxis: communities of philosophical inquiry as a model of (and for) social activism

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abstract

This article discusses the conditions under which dialogical learner-researchers can move out of the philosophical laboratory of a community of philosophical inquiry into the field of social activism, engaging in a critical and creative examination of society and seeking to change it. Based on Matthew Lipman's proposal that communities of philosophical inquiry can serve as a model of social activism in the present, it presents the community of philosophical inquiry as a model for social activism in the future. In other words, Lipman's central ideas in his earlier and later thought—including meaning as a mode of action, relevance as a way of examining life and stimulating influence for change as a form of creating a democratic society—establish two parallel circle of influence: the present time, in the shape of the philosophical community of inquiry that allows activist skills to be honed, and a social space that extends into the future as a forum for applying principles and bettering society. Finally, this paper adduces several forms of social activism that may be anchored in philosophical awareness of real conditions and their contexts. Through them, the community of philosophical inquiry not only constitutes a place in which young people's thought processes can be developed but also one in which they can aspire to become activists in various areas.

keywords: philosophy for children; philosophy with children; communities of philosophical inquiry; social activism.

del laboratorio a la praxis: comunidades de investigación filosófica como modelos de (y para) el activismo social

resumen

Este artículo discute las condiciones bajo las cuales los aprendices-investigadores dialógicos pueden salir del laboratorio filosófico de una comunidad de investigación filosófica al campo del activismo social, emprendiendo un examen crítico y creativo de la sociedad y tratando de cambiarla. Basado en la propuesta de Matthew Lipman de que las comunidades de investigación filosófica pueden servir como modelo de activismo social en el presente, presenta la comunidad de investigación filosófica como modelo para el activismo social en el futuro. En otras palabras, las ideas centrales de Lipman en su pensamiento primero y último -incluyendo el significado como modo de acción, la relevancia como forma de examinar la vida y estimular la influencia para el cambio como forma de crear una sociedad democrática- establecen dos círculos paralelos de influencia: El tiempo presente, en la forma de la comunidad filosófica de investigación que permite perfeccionar las habilidades de los activistas y un espacio social que se extiende al futuro como un foro para aplicar los principios y mejorar la sociedad. Finalmente, este trabajo sugiere varias formas de activismo social que pueden estar ancladas en la conciencia filosófica de las condiciones reales y sus contextos. A través de ellas, la comunidad de

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investigación filosófica no sólo constituye un lugar en el que los procesos de pensamiento de los jóvenes pueden desarrollarse, sino también uno en el que pueden aspirar a ser activistas en diversas áreas.

palabras clave: filosofía para niños; Filosofía con niños; Comunidades de investigación filosófica; activismo social.

do laboratorio à praxis: comunidades de investigação filosófica como modelos de (e para) o ativismo social

resumo
Este artigo discute as condições sob as quais os aprendentes-pesquisadores dialógicos podem partir do laboratório filosófico de uma comunidade de investigação filosófica para o campo do ativismo social, engajando-se em um exame crítico e criativo da sociedade e procurando mudá-la. Com base na proposta de Matthew Lipman de que as comunidades de investigação filosófica podem servir de modelo de ativismo social no presente, ele apresenta a comunidade de investigação filosófica como modelo para o ativismo social no futuro. Em outras palavras, as ideias centrais de Lipman em seu pensamento primeiro e último - incluindo o significado como um modo de ação, a relevância como forma de examinar a vida e estimular a influência para a mudança como forma de criar uma sociedade democrática - estabelecem dois círculos de influência paralelos: o tempo presente, sob a forma da comunidade filosófica de investigação que permite o aperfeiçoamento das habilidades ativistas e um espaço social que se estende para o futuro como um foro para aplicar os princípios e melhorar a sociedade. Finalmente, este artigo apresenta diversas formas de ativismo social que podem estar ancoradas na consciência filosófica das condições reais e seus contextos. Através delas, a comunidade de investigação filosófica não só constitui um lugar no qual os processos de pensamento dos jovens podem ser desenvolvidos, mas também um espaço em que eles podem aspirar a se tornarem ativistas em várias áreas.

palavras-chave: filosofia para crianças; filosofia com crianças; comunidades de investigação filosófica; ativismo social.

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introduction

Communities of philosophical inquiry seek to encourage children to think.[2] As Walter Omar Kohan observes, "Philosophy is a practice that problematizes ideas, beliefs and values (2015, p. 45). Two of its principal dimensions come to the fore in children's communities of philosophical inquiry—criticism and creativity. To quote Kohan again, "As a critical task, philosophy questions values, ideas and faiths that permeate the practices socially dominant. At the same time, as a creative task, philosophy sets conditions in order to think and promote other others, alternative to the actual ones" (KOHAN, 2015, p. 45). Communities of philosophical inquiry thus seek to provide young learners with a safe space characterized by trust in which they can raise the questions that interest them about what we call "life." Choosing which of these they wish to discuss, they engage in a broad dialogue that promotes not only critical and creative but also caring thought by fostering the development of philosophical and socio-philosophical sensitivity (MOHR LONE, 2012a, 2012b; KIZEL, 2015). As Haynes and Murris (2012, p. 2) note, P4C offers a physical and metaphorical space in which to listen, speak, or remain silent, thereby enabling children to experience what happens when they make choices and decisions, however difficult or complex.

As the literature on communities of philosophical inquiry and their potential for cultivating and developing a range of thinking skills (GARCÍA-MORIYÓN; REBOLLO; COLOM, 2002; GREGORY, 2007; CAM, 2013; MURRIS, 2013) grows, however, we are increasingly faced with the question of the extent to which P4C is intended and can serve as a catalyst for social activism now and in the future.

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[2]Herein, I shall use P4C to designate both Philosophy for Children and Philosophy with Children.

This article addresses this question on a number of levels. Firstly, it examines the theoretical writings of Matthew Lipman. Throughout his career, Lipman devoted to his attention to the link between philosophical questions and discussion in the framework of the "philosophical laboratory"—i.e., the philosophical community of inquiry—and how these skills are put to use in a social activism beyond the borders of the community of inquiry. This view revolves around the temporal poles—the philosophical community of inquiry as a model of socio-pedagogic activism in the present and as a model for social activism in the future, once the children have finished their schooling. Herein, I analyze the theoretical links between these two points in time.

Secondly, it adduces a number of examples of social activism, discussing whether Lipman's thought can be translated into an activist praxis and the possibility of transforming the philosophical laboratory/community of inquiry into a form of short- and long-term social activism. Here, I look at projects such as PEACE, which are already making use of a language that bridges between dialogical philosophy with children and contemporary forms of social activism.

the philosophical laboratory as a platform for activism

At the end of the first chapter of his *Philosophy and Childhood: Critical Perspectives and Affirmative Practices*, Kohan identifies one of the most important challenges facing contemporary P4C: "[…] if it is to be a truly philosophical venture into education, it demands a truly philosophical posture. It demands the prevalence of the question. As long as p4c's answers hide its questions, the movement might be able to impact educational systems, but the philosophical, educational and political force of that impact will be seriously affected" (2014, p. 10). He then goes on to address the link between engaging in philosophical thought within the philosophical community of inquiry and social activism in the present. Following Jaspers (1959), he argues that the three traditional pillars of philosophy—wonder, doubt, and commotion —should be complemented by dissatisfaction, this serving as a key factor particularly in such economic, social, and political environments as Latin America. *Contra* Lipman, he asserts: "I don't

believe that philosophy can be found, as Lipman (2001, p. 406) has suggested, in a body of abstract, complex, general and ill-defined ideas" (KOHAN, 2014, p. 7).

Kohan distinguishes between the ancient Greek pursuit of truth and our current focus on its functioning, creation, legitimization, and transfer. One of the central questions P4C must address today is the degree to which it is relevant and can serve as a source of influence—primarily with respect to social change amongst both children and adults. In other words, to what degree does philosophical engagement in the philosophical laboratory/community of inquiry impact children—or more precisely, their belief in their ability to be a force for change in their broader environment while still in school and then as what we frequently call "significant adults"?

This influence being exerted in wide social realms closely interlinked with the political world, we must ask to what degree philosophical thought can help children understand that they form part of a social structure that both restricts and equips them. To what degree does philosophical inquiry constitute a model of activism that heightens their awareness of their ability to bring about social change on the one hand and motivates them to put this capacity into action on the other? To what extent does P4C enable even relatively young children to adopt an activist stance from a young age—i.e., seek to engage in social activism by defining and analyzing problems and offering relevant solutions? I would like to suggest herein that "seeking to change the situation" can be understood as a codeword for self-competency and a prerequisite for engaging in an activism whose features I shall discuss below.

matthew lipman's writings

Let me first review Matthew Lipman's thought, as expressed in both his early and later writings. He argues that, in contrast to such methods as "critical thinking"— which fails to enable children to understand in their own unique way the richness and complexity of the world in which they live and thus exemplify their own perspective (especially with regard to the change they think should happen)—philosophical reflection possesses an innately activist dimension:

> If philosophy is seen to represent the natural fulfillment and culmination of childhood curiosity and wonder, of childhood speculation about the nature of things, and of childhood concern for truth about reality, then nothing could be more in keeping with children's own intellectual dispositions than philosophical activities. (LIPMAN; SHARP, 1978, p. 7).

Let us address first the philosophical community of inquiry Lipman discusses in his writings. According to him, this seeks to inculcate two simultaneous positions—affirmative and critical. The first perceives, elucidates, and affirms the "existing situation" and social status quo; the second challenges present reality. If you like, we may say that the first plays "inside," the second— frequently at the same time—wanting to be "offside": "other" or "alternative." By definition, this "game" is characterized not only by a complex dialectic but also by a pedagogic and social activism based on Kohan's "dissatisfaction" factor (2014, p. 7) or Lipman and Sharp's "distrust" principle (1978, p. 8).

A systematic and in-depth reading of Lipman's works indicates that his thought is informed by the belief that the philosophical community of inquiry can serve to help build (young) individuals' sense of self- and community -construct, enabling them to identify the problems and deficiencies of the society in which they live and propose solutions to them. Philosophy is thus a motivating force not only for (self) action but also for (social and environmental) activism, helping to transform personal competency into social activism. It actively searches through questions and finds by gaining answers, both these circles being driven by a teleological form of thinking that constitutes the platform from which change can be implemented. As Lipman states: "Our contemporary conception of education as inquiry combines both of these aims. Its emphasis is on the process as well as on the product" (LIPMAN, 1997a, p. 4).

Lipman's paradigm here is the pedagogy of looking for meaning—not merely in abstract but also in practical terms. I suggest that this may be called "meaning-making as an action" or "the action of meaning-making." Within the school framework, this initially takes form of the legitimizing of questions, encouraging students to become active in preparing for their future lives: "Meanings show themselves so intricately involved in our lives that a philosophical analysis of qualitative experience can hardly avoid dealing with

them" (LIPMAN, 1956, p. 41). This space in which students are exposed to valuable experiences is one of the most important goals of the educational process: "Once it is acknowledged that, as far as children themselves are concerned, no educational plan will be worthy of the name unless it results in meaningful school and after school experiences, we can feel some confidence in having arrived at one of the significant criteria for the evaluation of a an educational design" (LIPMAN; SHARP; OSCANYAN, 1980, p. 8).

Lipman thus views philosophical activity as a form of training for action, the school serving as a dialogical space within which students can experience paradigmatic thought change: "What was needed was an education that made children more reasonable and more capable of exercising good judgment" (LIPMAN, 2008, p.107). At the basis of his philosophy lies the belief that the best way to improve education as part of the betterment of society at large would be to create philosophical communities of inquiry in the classroom that would constitute a model for a democratic and pluralistic society. Determining that the first step towards accomplishing this goal was to address the classroom text and learning materials, he began writing a philosophical textbook "that would allow both teachers and children to engage simultaneously and openly in inquiry at the same time in the classroom" (LIPMAN, 2008, p.109).

When he published his first philosophical novel for children in 1967, however, he promptly realized that it could not easily be integrated into the school curriculum without an accompanying pedagogy—P4C: "I couldn't phase philosophy into the educational bloodstream without at the same time phasing in a pedagogy that would facilitate rather than interfere with the philosophical-educational fusion" (LIPMAN, 2008, p. 118). Analyzing the existing curriculum, he proposed a pilot project "whose ostensible aim was to determine the feasibility of teaching reasoning to fifth-grade children," carried out at the Rand School, Montclair, New Jersey during the 1970-71 academic year (LIPMAN, 1973, p. 17).

Following a meeting with two groups of twenty elementary-school students, he understood that the active element of young people's activity is

predicated on the pursuit of meaning—in this case, learning. Youngsters could not only be passive learners relying on answers to the questions their teachers asked them but also self-motivated to ask questions of their own: "We felt they were satisfied that what they were doing was meaningful. Children don't like being told, when they ask what something means, or why they have to do something, 'Wait, you'll see.' They want meaning now. They want meaning to be intrinsic, not extrinsic" (LIPMAN, 1973, p. 21).

Lipman's conclusions from his initial experiments highlighted the centrality of the fact that school learning in its current pedagogic environment is stagnant. He thus decided that philosophy could and should enhance the development and construction of a dialectic relationship with the present situation—i.e., the cultivation of criticism and opposition to "reality": "I am now convinced that philosophy can and should be a part of the entire length of a child's education. In a sense this is a kind of tautology, because it is abundantly clear that children hunger for meaning, and get turned off from education when it ceases to be meaningful to them" (LIPMAN, 1973, p. 27).

Throughout his writings, Lipman attaches importance to training activist learners by involving all their literacy capabilities. In most of his early and later thought, he argues that students should be given the tools with which to discover the meaning embedded in relations and social ties. One of these circles of meaning pertains to understanding texts and drawing meaning from words and art. In order to gain this skill, students must be equipped linguistically and literarily— i.e., gain mastery of those channels that enable them to make valuable and profound use of texts whose significance may only become apparent as they grow older. He thus not only declared conversation to be the "minimal condition for civility" (LIPMAN, 1988a, p. 49) but also encouraged a multi-element communal process moving from question to dialogue, from doubt to looking for common answers, from answers to personal and group activity in general in deed and action.

A multi-year philosophical community of inquiry operating in an educational institution, he believed, could provide a framework for the gaining of these skills, turning them into "second nature" and transforming students into inquirers into their surroundings and thus capable of engaging in critical and creative thinking about them. It would also foster in them a multidimensional care and concern for their environment and its ecology. Such students would not only be agents but also participants in society—not just employed but also responsible citizens: "Even if philosophy does not provide ultimate meanings, it conveys to the child that the quest is feasible and worthwhile" (LIPMAN ; SHARP, 1978, p. 8).

He then proceeded to posit that "It is, thus, by doing philosophical inquiry generally that children prepare themselves to do ethical inquiry, and by doing ethical inquiry with regard to instrumental and procedural consideration they prepare themselves to give serious attention to substantive values" (LIPMAN, 1997a, p. 3). He makes an essential differentiation between truth-related information and meaning-oriented philosophy—one of the formative constituents of meaning being relevancy and one of its central goals action. He thus argues: "You need to ask the child to clarify, explain exactly what their question means so everyone in the group can understand. Philosophy is about meaning. Science is about truth" (LIPMAN, 2004, p. 44).

This view opposes the Socratic and Platonic ethos of pursuit of the truth and doing philosophy as the highest educational goal, perceiving experience in a Deweyan sense and attributing importance to it from not only in intellectual terms but also practical ones—the betterment of human life: "Above all a community of inquiry involves questioning, more narrowly a quest for truth, more broadly a quest for meaning" (LIPMAN, 2003a, p. 95).

philosophical laboratory / community of inquiry and social activism

What elements promote activism in children in the philosophical laboratory/community of inquiry? In a 2003 interview, Lipman identified two, working in conjunction with one another. The first he calls the "social goal" (i.e., democracy), maintaining that we must use philosophy as a tool to train students

to become members of a democratic society as part of the striving to bring democracy to the whole world. The second is the "personal goal," wherein philosophy encourages children to think for themselves: "We could use thinking that is well disciplined, logical, creative, caring for other and for one's self" (LIPMAN, 2003b).

The active philosophical laboratory thus functions as a space for training in Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) sense of "doing philosophy." As Gale notes, "For Deleuze… creating concepts and the active process of conceptualization is also a practice of *becoming* which not only involves using ideas and concepts in practices of meaning-making but also acknowledging their inevitable connection with affects and percepts in the complexities of relational space" (2015, p. 71–72 [original italics]). Being active, philosophy is always a creative practice. Applying Deleuzean philosophy and thinking, students can learn to be actively involved in the creation of concepts, participating with others in the processes and practices of conceptualization. This stimulates them to exercise agency and make their own experience real: "By promoting a form of agency of this kind, learners are encouraged to be involved in *meaning-making* rather than being constrained to conform to pedagogical practices which involve *teaching meaning*" (GALE, 2015, p. 71 [original italics]).

The goal of prompting activism via the asking of questions and engaging in discussion to develop thinking skills is to enable children to find meaning in their lives: "Philosophical discussions are precisely the proper medium for putting things in perspective, getting a sense of proportion, and achieving some kind of insight into the direction of one's life" (LIPMAN, 1973, p. 27). Hereby, children gain both a sense of purpose and a sense of direction, the latter representing the ability to identify aims and targets—including those that may later be subject to change: "Once the child can perceive what the basic direction of his or her own life is, then that becomes the basic criterion against which he measures the choices he makes in particular situations" (LIPMAN, 1980, p. 178). In both instances, "The point is that students must be encouraged to become reasonable for their own

good (i.e., as a step toward their own autonomy), and not just for our good (i.e., because the growing rationalization of society requires it)" (LIPMAN, 1988b, p. 10).

The activities of philosophical communities of inquiry occur in two parallel dimensions—time and space. Communal spaces now, they anticipate future social spaces, thus being oriented towards both short- and long-term thinking habits and activism. As Lipman notes,

> Either way philosophical inquiry is student-centered, and it is the thinking of each student that is dramatized, as well as the thinking of each collective group. The philosophical admonition to 'Know Thyself' is not to be taken lightly, nor is the Socratic warning that 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' It is the life of each and every philosophy student that must be examined and understood. Each student's mind becomes a theatre within a theatre, a drama within a drama. (LIPMAN, 1997b, p. 77).

In order to encourage activism, philosophical communities of inquiry must feel relevant. The group-collective process thus seeks to avoid closed information, focusing rather on questioning and openness, as though in a years-long race during which the building blocks of development are put into place to ensure that children grow into future citizens. Relevance is essential because

> knowledge and life are not alien to one another, and talking about understanding of the world, and the problems that one faces in one's personal life, is really important to education. It is essential to education that we show the relevance of that education to the world and to the subjects that study the world. (LIPMAN; SHARP, 1992).

Studying the world begins inside the classroom. In the initial primary-philosophical circle, students learn to recognize and develop their own views and those of their peers: "The meaning to children of their own experience may be, in part, its exclusiveness—the realization that what is impossible for others is indeed possible for them, and them alone" (LIPMAN, 1980, p. 294). The encounter with otherness within the philosophical community of inquiry is paramount, forming an essential tool for the cultivation of the ability to influence others by acknowledging their influence upon us: "The discussion promotes children's awareness of one another's personalities, interests, values, beliefs and biases" (LIPMAN, 1973, p. 12).

Within this circle, young students are not only to listened to but also engage in discussion with others, thereby developing the openness and flexibility that is vital for espousing the activism necessary to implement change. In this way, P4C can be expected to flourish in a heterogeneous space where learners speak out of a variety of life styles and experiences, where different beliefs as to what is important are explicit, and where a plurality of thinking styles exists.

The philosophical laboratory/community of inquiry also allows its members to experience the boundaries of their capabilities, helping them to understand not only what is possible but also what is impossible and ask questions about the space I suggest calling "impossible" or "difficult and limited." Such a view of problems enables them to realize their limitations and develop cognitive and social skills (such as empathy and listening) that aid them with interacting with people from different backgrounds. The coalitions of influence and strategies that develop in philosophical communities of inquiry can form the pattern for other coalitions beyond the school walls. In this way, the democratic experience is not only a learning goal but also forms the basis for meaning and action: "An exercise can have a logical function and at the same time it can simulate social practices that play an important role in social experience. In this connection, games represent exercises that sharpen student thinking about their daily lives … [being] helpful in distinguishing between intended and unintended meanings" (LIPMAN, 1997b, p 75).

In the first circle of influence that is the community of inquiry, "Children must be allowed to experience what it is like to exist in a context of mutual respect, of disciplined dialogue, of cooperative inquiry, free of arbitrariness and manipulation" (LIPMAN, 1988a, p. 47). In the second, "Without the possibilities of ideal conditions, or at least of improvement, things wouldn't have their present meanings for us … So a case could be made for meanings as the contrast between the actual and the possible" (LIPMAN, 1980, p. 11, 294). Philosophical communities of inquiry thus afford the opportunity for the development of ethical, dialogical students with the potential to be activists characterized by "1)

Respect for other point of view; 2) patience with other deliberators; 3) dedication to rationality; 4) intellectual creativity in the formulation of new hypotheses" (LIPMAN, 2003a, p. 115).

How do youngsters develop an activist awareness in the philosophical laboratory/community of inquiry? Social indifference begins to be replaced by personal awareness in stages, beginning with the asking of questions relevant to the students' experiences and social contexts—in particular when the members of the laboratory/community come from different backgrounds and sectors. This heterogeneity heightens awareness and acceptance of diverse identities (KIZEL, 2016). Philosophical practice thus prompts awareness not only as an intellectual activity but also as a call to social learning:

> It is, thus, by doing philosophical inquiry generally that children prepare themselves to do ethical inquiry, and by doing ethical inquiry with regard to instrumental and procedural consideration [that] they prepare themselves to give serious attention to substantive values. (LIPMAN, 1997a, p. 3).

Social learning necessarily takes place within a context: "An individual has relationships with his work, home, ideals, activities, his past, with the country he lives in, and with humanity in general … Meanings consist precisely in the relationships things have to one another … To understand what something means to us is to grasp the relationships in which it stands to us and to everything else to which it is related" (LIPMAN, 1980, p. 350).

Already in his early writings with Ann Margaret Sharp, Lipman notes how important the social framework is to young learners, positing that it enables them to engage in activist thinking by putting their thinking into "some kind of context which will make their thoughts more meaningful to them, for the more comprehensive the setting of an idea is, the richer will that idea be in meaning" (LIPMAN; SHARP, 1975, p. 20). He thus argues that contexts are the source of meaning: "One way in which in which we discover meaning is to discover connections … As long as one does not know the context of an episode, it may seem meaningless" (LIPMAN; SHARP, 1975, 67). Activist thought therefore includes at least six elements: "1) discovering alternatives; 2) discovering impartiality; 2) discovering consistency; 3) discovering the feasibility of giving

reasons for beliefs; 4) discovering comprehensiveness; 5) discovering situations; 6) discovering part-whole relationships" (LIPMAN; SHARP; OSCANYAN, 1980, p. 68).

the meaning and purpose of activism in p4c

Philosophical communities of inquiry can develop a sense of social, political and economic activism in their members, serving as a space in which (in correspondence to their age) the great questions of life can be addressed and the relevance of current issues and their impact on children while still in school and after their graduation assessed. As Kennedy (2010) argues, they can sometimes thus function as revolutionary entities. The educated use of texts, cultivation of a climate of trust, construction of a safe place, and fostering of cooperation and collaboration can all help to promote activism of diverse types. In the following, I offer several examples of activism that may be developed within philosophical communities of inquiry in the wake of Lipman's thought. Resting upon theories from the field of educational leadership, these can be closely associated with the forms of activism that may emerge in young people's dialogical activities.

The first example is establishment activism. This is based on the institutional leadership approach (SELZNICK, 1957; HIRSCH, 1986; LEBLEBICI; SALANCIK; COPAY; KING, 1991; KRAATZ; MOORE, 2002) and the premise of the need for activism in the organizational realm—student councils or political, social, and economic student organizations. This type of activism seeks to help institutions—large or small—to enhance their goals and examine their organizational mission and vision. It can thus exert a cultural influence upon the organization, stimulating its members to commit themselves to the vision and goals and act as a source of inspiration for achieving them. It can prompt leaders to ask themselves questions about how to initiate, change, develop, and advance their organizational goals. A traditional form of activism that is neither iconoclastic nor regards itself as politically radical, its first priority is to an organizational coherency and teamwork that will enhance its organizational performance

In order to promote activism of this type, philosophical communities of inquiry—especially those amongst young adults—must base their discussions and questions upon the idea of acting on behalf of others, in particular the weak sectors in society—providing optimal cultural and other services and fostering distributive and social justice, for instance.

The second example of social activism is based on the model of protest leadership (FOSTER, 2003). This holds that activism forms a response to administrative limitations in diverse areas in society or various organizational spaces—including schools. Seeking to counter ideas, practices, institutions, and values that form a system, it tends to be anti-cultural in its dynamics, its goal being to disrupt oppressive cultures. It may also be based on the fundamental questions critical pedagogy asks about the hegemonic force found in society, the power relations operated by economic institutions, curricula and textbooks, and questions related to ideology, knowledge, power, politics, and education that undermine mainstream assumptions and presuppositions.

Within philosophical communities of inquiry, this type of activism can take the form of "enabling identities" (KIZEL, 2016). Herein, employing the basic tools of critical pedagogy, inquiry can be recognized as subject to power relations and hegemonic influences rather than sterile. Accepting the domination of hegemonic questions and their reasoning resembles what Freire (1970) calls "banking education." A form of learning that isolates the learner from the content and process of education, this inhibits inquiry, creativity, and dialogue. As a result, students become mired in the world of the oppressor that seeks to dehumanize others.

A third type of activism is based on the advocacy leadership model, at the heart of which lies the view that the school serves as a site of conflict over ideas and resources (ANDERSON, 2009). Advocacy activism and leadership champions public education for all students. Understanding the political nature of education, it is willing to take risks and ask questions to unravel issues. Willing to go beyond its comfort zones, it recognizes that social inequities exist beyond the school, not

only resisting neoliberal and neoconservative reforms but also creating and enact counter proposals. As Hoffman (2009) suggests, advocacy leaders engage in new ways of thinking about the relationship between policy and practice, accountability, leadership, and pedagogy. Smyth et al. (2009) similarly encourage educators and leaders to inculcate social activism by going beyond the classroom and school building and engaging in a relational politics of school and community activism that promotes trust, respect, and regard for the knowledge and wisdom of educators and community members.

I suggest that Lipman's notion that the members of philosophical communities of inquiry can impact broader society in the future and train them for activism in adult life fits this approach very well, supporting the claim that the school is a very important social institution and thus holding it responsible for society. At the same time, however, its activist stance seeks to stimulate young people and adults to act, in conjunction with other bodies, to improve society as a whole. Education towards collaboration within philosophical communities of inquiry thus closely corresponds to the approach that promotes cooperation between schools and communal organizations for the sake of social change (in tandem with outside experts). This orientation also being based on the possibility of diagnosing the community's strengths and abilities as a way of dealing with difficulties, members of philosophical communities of inquiry in effect serve as agents of change within a democratic participative culture, witnessing how the community can transform and affirm the power of human agency and activism alike.

The research literature on activism has long sought to decipher its "DNA" in the context of youngsters, determining why some are active and others not. Traditionally, this conundrum has been answered by adducing various "personalogical" (ZUKIER, 1982) accounts of recruitment. According to McAdam (1986), the basic assumption underlying such accounts is that activists possess a characteristic that compels them to participate or at the very least renders them susceptible to recruiting appeals. Among the individual attributes most frequently

cited as stimulating activism is a strong affinity with the goals of the movement or a well-articulated set of grievances consistent with the movement's ideology. Some authors attribute ideological leanings to the effects of early childhood socialization. Others describe them as a byproduct of more immediate social-psychological dynamics. Regardless of their differences, all models of activism identify the motive for participation as lying within the individual actor.

Over the past decade, however, the emergence and increasing influence of resource mobilization and political process perspectives in the study of social movements has led to growing dissatisfaction with the individual motivational accounts of recruitment. It is now increasingly being argued that structural availability is more important than attitudinal affinity in explaining differential involvement in activism. As "organizations" that establish the meaning behind activism, employing questions as the launching point for examining reality and providing tools to consolidate views based on democratic discussion that raises doubts regarding prevailing norms and conventions, philosophical communities of inquiry are ideal forums within which activism can be promoted.

an activist example

Let me conclude with an example of a programme that promotes the adoption of philosophical community of inquiry methods and student dialogue. The PEACE project—Philosophical Enquiry Advancing Cosmopolitan Engagement—is based on the assumption that in today's globalized world intercultural integration requires specific strategies to destroy prejudice, challenge stereotypes, overcome cultural obstacles, and foster dialogue. Of these, education for a cosmopolitan engagement through specific educational actions and practices appears to be most effective in the context of children and adolescents.

In their preface, the founders state: "The development of a cosmopolitan society implies the promotion of critical, creative and caring thinking to prepare people for life as active citizens in a democracy. This involves knowledge and understanding, skills and aptitudes, values and disposition. One focus of the project PEACE is developing learner's abilities for taking actions as democratic

citizens within the global context, taking into account both local and global issues. This means promoting an awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity as a resource for democratic thinking, and the need to combat racism, prejudice and xenophobia which emerges as a by-product of parochial and narrow minded thinking" (STRIANO; CAMHY; GARCÍA-MORIYÓN; GLASER; OLIVERIO, 2013, p. 4).

In the spirit of Lipman and activity within and after the philosophical community of inquiry, the head of the programme observes:

> In the philosophical dialogue, where all participants are equal partners, you learn to use thoughts and arguments in a well-reflected way, to explain opinions, to construct suppositions, to develop concepts, to discover various possibilities and alternatives, to put questions, to make decisions, to recognize different points of view, to practice logical thinking. This leads to a better understanding of problems, to a better ability of judgment and articulation and after [*sic*] all to more tolerance towards other opinions. (CAMHY, 2007, p. 34–35).

Or as the team formulate the vision:

> PEACE fosters the mutual knowledge and comprehension of different cultures by improving children's critical, creative, collaborative and caring thinking. … Growing up practicing dialogue, the students will become able to sustain intercultural dialogue and to perform an active citizenship in order to promote ethnic and gender equality, solidarity, and social cohesion within a cosmopolitan framework in all the dimensions of associate life. (STRIANO et al., 2013: 4).

conclusion

This article has sought to evince the close links between the philosophical laboratory/community of inquiry that espouses the ideal of dialogue between its members around the questions that they raise and a democratic discussion of these designed to promote critical, creative, and caring thinking — and the ability to put notions of social change into practice in the form of social activism. Lipman's central ideas in his earlier and later thought—including meaning as a mode of action, relevance as a way of examining life and stimulating influence for change as a form of creating a democratic society—establish two parallel circle of influence: the present time, in the shape of the philosophical community of inquiry that allows activist skills to be honed, and a social space that extends into the future as a forum for applying principles and bettering society. The philosophical

community of inquiry thus not only constitutes a place in which young people's thought processes can be developed but also one in which they can aspire to become activists in various areas, ranging from the traditional example of impact within organizations to more radical alternatives that question the norms and conventions of the existing social order.

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